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Progress in preparatory activities at the local, national, subregional, regional and international levels, as well as by major groups

Report of the Secretary-General

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Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/199 of 20 December 2000, decided to call world leaders to a summit to undertake a 10-year review of progress on implementation of Agenda 21[1] and reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in early fall, 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly stressed the importance of early and effective preparations for the Summit and a comprehensive assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be carried out at the local, national, regional and international levels by Governments and the United Nations system so as to ensure high-quality inputs to the review process.

3. Also in resolution 55/199, the General Assembly decided that at its organizational session, the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, should consider progress made in preparatory activities carried out at the local, national, subregional, regional and international levels, as well as by major groups. The present report is hereby submitted for that purpose.

I. Preparations at the local level

4. The "Local Agenda 21" approach has been recognized as one of the most proactive and successful ways to adapt the goals of Agenda 21 to the local level. Since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, this approach has generated local action plans, implementation activities and tangible results in integrating economic, environmental and social needs in hundreds of local communities, towns and cities around the world.

5. A joint survey conducted by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the five-year anniversary in 1997 of the Rio Conference identified over 1,800 Local Agenda 21 initiatives at various stages of implementation and found many more to be in the works. The results of the first survey were submitted to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to review progress in implementing Agenda 21 objectives (June 1997, New York). Governments and other participants at the nineteenth special session of the Assembly expressed their appreciation of the results of the survey and the information it provided to the intergovernmental process.

6. This encouraged the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and ICLEI, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to launch a second international survey for the 10-year anniversary of Rio in 2002. The second survey will measure the scope of Local Agenda 21 activity around the world 10 years after the adoption of Agenda 21; assess the impact of ongoing Local Agenda 21 activities; identify tangible outcomes of Local Agenda 21 activities on environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development; and identify regional and global trends in the context of key sustainable development issues. The Second Local Agenda 21 Survey was distributed in fall 2000 to more than 2,000 local authorities and over 300 associations of local authorities. The results will be collected and analysed by the end of 2001 and a Survey report will be available by January 2002.

7. In addition, an extensive consultation process among local authorities started in July 2000 and will continue through the end of 2001, including meetings of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) (in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and ICLEI (in Honolulu, Hawaii), both in early May 2001.

II. National preparations

8. The Commission on Sustainable Development invited all Governments to undertake national assessments as early as possible. The Commission agreed that national reports that had been prepared by Governments since 1992 on implementation of Agenda 21 and to which major groups had contributed, could provide a fair basis for guiding national preparatory processes. United Nations entities including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP

are providing assistance to countries in support of national-level preparations.

9. The Secretariat is coordinating preparation of country profiles which will cover the main thematic areas of Agenda 21. The country profiles are based on information contained in national reports, which were submitted by national Governments to the Commission on Sustainable Development during the period 1997-2001. In addition, the Secretariat has suggested a proposed framework for addressing key issues in reviewing and assessing progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national and regional levels. The purpose is to facilitate consistency in the approach to the 2002 reviews undertaken at all levels. The proposed framework would allow countries to identify the main accomplishments since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development along with the main constraints and challenges that they have encountered. The framework, in a form of a short questionnaire, was transmitted to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York in August 2000.

10. To create incentives that would enhance a stimulating and participatory environment for preparations at the national and local levels, the Secretariat invited all countries to launch the following four initiatives, which would have the potential of raising the effectiveness of national preparatory processes, lead to a greater commitment to sustainable development by all partners involved and enhance a sense of ownership of these preparatory processes among the public at large:

(a) "**101 ways to promote sustainable development**": countries are invited to select one sustainable development activity that took place in their country following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and that, in their view, brought the most successful results;

(b) "**Sustainable development visions for the twenty-first century**": countries are invited to organize a national-level competition involving major groups in which the participants would be invited to prepare short essays outlining their visions of sustainable development challenges, concerns and opportunities;

(c) "**Children's Agenda 21 posters**": countries are invited to organize national-level competition involving schoolchildren ages 7-12 in which the participants would be invited to create posters capturing their sustainable development aspirations and concerns;

(d) "**National progressions**": this initiative would be a national broad-based consultation process to identify three to four specific sustainable development progress targets that are achievable in the next 5-10 years and will make a significant difference in the country's progress towards sustainability.

11. The results of national competitions submitted by participating countries would be broadly publicized by the Secretariat and brought to the attention of regional and global preparatory meetings. Some of the leaders/initiators of the activities identified as country finalists could be invited to one of the preparatory meetings or to the 2002 Summit where an exhibit and/or special presentations might be organized.

12. Based on the experience gained in the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, national preparations would be greatly facilitated if countries set up national preparatory committees that involved representatives of government, local authorities, professional associations, major groups, media and other partners. The functions of such national preparatory committees for 2002 could include:

(a) Undertaking national reviews/assessments, using, inter alia, national reports/country profiles prepared for the Commission on Sustainable Development and the framework for addressing key issues for the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Supporting "101 ways", "Visions", "Posters" and "Progressions" initiatives;

(c) Raising awareness at the local/national levels.

13. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the UNDP Administrator sent a joint letter in summer 2000 to all the United Nations Resident Coordinators, encouraging them to actively support the national preparatory processes for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

14. According to the information received by the Secretariat, many countries are setting up National Preparatory Committees and/or undertaking the above-mentioned initiatives. Particular attention is paid to multi-stakeholder consultations/dialogue in conducting

national assessments. Information on this process is available on the official Summit web site and will be regularly updated.

III. Regional preparations

15. Regional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development will take place during 2001. UNEP regional offices, the regional commissions and, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP and other institutions at the regional levels are taking the lead in organizing the preparatory activities at the regional level.

16. The main preparatory activities are:

(a) Intergovernmental processes in which stakeholders will take part;

(b) Regional round tables of eminent persons.

IV. Regional and subregional intergovernmental process

17. Within the overall preparatory process, the agreed tasks of the regional preparatory committees are aimed at:

(a) Undertaking regional (subregional) assessments of progress, including:

(i) Achievements in implementing Agenda 21 in the region since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(ii) Prospective outlooks and main constraints;

(iii) Identifying new initiatives and commitments within regions and subregions;

(b) Formulating regional platforms that would outline key policy issues, priorities and follow-up actions.

18. The meetings of most regional preparatory committees, to be organized by UNEP regional offices and the regional commissions, will occur in the period August-November 2001, with meetings of subregional preparatory committees occurring mainly between April and June. UNDP also plays a key role in supporting the preparatory process at all levels in all regions. Multi-stakeholder consultations/dialogues either preceded or are integrated as part of respective regional and subregional preparatory committees.

19. The following are the planned dates and venues for regional preparatory meetings, which are subject to some changes:

(a) Africa:

(i) Regional preparatory committee: at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, 28-31 August 2001:

a. 28 August: Civil society/non-governmental organization segment;

b. 29 August: high-level multi-stakeholders' segment;

c. 30 and 31 August: regional preparatory committee;

(ii) Subregional preparatory committees:

a West Africa (Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)): Abuja, Nigeria, 25-28 June;

b. Southern Africa (Southern African Development Community (SADC)): Botswana, 28-31 May;

c. Central Africa (Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)): Libreville, Gabon, 9-13 July;

d. Northern Africa (Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)): Tunis, Tunisia, 11-14 June;

e. East Africa (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa/Intergovernmental Authority on Development (COMESA/IGAD)): Djibouti, 16-19 July;

(b) Asia and the Pacific:

(i) Regional preparatory committee: November 2001 (venue and date to be confirmed);

(ii) Subregional preparatory committees

a. South-East Asia: Manila, Philippines, 4 and 5 June 2001;

b. Central Asia: Almaty, Kazakhstan, end-May or mid-June 2001 (to be confirmed);

c. North-east Asia: Beijing, China, mid-July 2001 (to be confirmed);

d. South Asia: (to be confirmed);

e. Pacific (to be confirmed);

(c) West Asia:

(i) Regional preparatory committee: Cairo, Egypt, 28-30 October: preceded by a Stakeholder Round Table, Bahrain, 24 and 25 September;

(ii) Special session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR): 28 October;

(iii) Special session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE), Arab Ministers of Planning and Arab Ministers of Economics: 30 October;

(d) Latin America and the Caribbean:

(i) Regional preparatory committee: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23 and 24 October 2001, following the thirteenth meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (21-23 October);

(ii) Subregional preparatory committees:

a. Mesoamerica (Central America and Mexico): Panama or El Salvador, 21 and 22 June 2001;

b. Caribbean: Havana, Cuba, June 2001;

c. Andean Zone: Ecuador or Venezuela (dates to be confirmed);

d. Southern Cone: Santiago, Chile, 14 and 15 June 2001;

(e) Europe: regional preparatory committee: Geneva, Switzerland, 24 and 25 September 2001, as a special session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (including a multi-stakeholder dialogue segment), preceded by a meeting of senior officials of the full ECE member countries, Geneva, 12 and 13 July 2001.

V. Regional round tables

20. In addition to the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, a series of eminent persons' regional round tables is being organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in consultation with the regional commissions, UNEP and other organizations. These are designed to take full advantage of the significant additional experience that is available from people who have political and practical experience in sustainable development work and who have been actively involved in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national and regional levels. Each round table will involve about 25-30 eminent persons, from all key sectors of society, who have experience of sustainable development issues in the region and who can contribute original ideas to the debate in a personal capacity.

21. The main objective is for the round tables to elaborate practical proposals and suggest innovative approaches aimed at expediting progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. Recommendations emanating from the round tables will be included in the meeting reports, which will be made widely available for consideration in advance of the regional preparatory committees.

22. These round tables are expected to be held in June/July 2001 for each of the following regions: Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; Europe and North America; Central and South Asia; East and South-East Asia and the Pacific. An additional "Thematic Roundtable" of eminent persons for the West Asia region convened by CAMRE, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UNEP/Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA), in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, will be held in Beirut from 9 to 11 April 2001. Venues and exact dates for these round tables have yet to be confirmed by the host Governments, but details will be placed as soon as possible on the United Nations Summit web site.

VI. Global-level preparations

23. In January 2001, in follow-up to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly it was decided to establish a High-level Steering Committee for the 2002 Summit. The Committee is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and includes heads of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Department of Public Information, the Executive Director of UNEP and the Administrator of UNDP.

24. A Task Force chaired by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs together with all the relevant partners of the United Nations Secretariat will deal with organizational issues.

25. The Commission on Sustainable Development will act as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The organizational session will be held from 30 April to 2 May 2001 and will be followed by three additional sessions. The last preparatory session will be held in Indonesia at the ministerial level in mid-2002.

Documentation

26. The Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory committee will have before it in April-May 2000 a series of thematic reports prepared by the task managers from within the United Nations system, reviewing main accomplishments and constraints within each thematic cluster of the chapters of Agenda 21. Such clustering was applied to promote, as much as possible, an integrated rather than a chapter-by-chapter review and assessment. The comprehensive review report on the implementation of Agenda 21 to be submitted to the first substantive session of the Commission acting as the preparatory committee (January 2002) will be prepared in consultation with the United Nations system. That report is intended to be organized around several strategic cross-cutting issues in the sustainable development agenda which would integrate, in a holistic way, specific sectoral and cross-sectoral thematic areas of Agenda 21.

Global thematic round tables

27. Plans are also being made to organize in late 2001 global thematic round tables of eminent persons to discuss strategic issues, which would emanate from the Secretary-General's report with a view to enriching the contribution to the global preparatory process.

Other initiatives

28. There are a number of individual initiatives organized by United Nations system organizations. These include, among others, the *World Health Report* of the World Health Organization (WHO), the UNEP *Global Environment Outlook* (third report), the UNDP Poverty and Environment Initiative, the World Bank *World Development Report*, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) output *World Food Summit: Five Years Later*, which are aimed at enriching the United Nations system's contribution to the Summit.

VII. Public outreach and awareness-raising

29. The Department of Public Information, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other partners are in the process of elaborating a 2002 public outreach/media strategy. In August 2000, a special 2002 issue of *CSD Update* was circulated to more than 4,500 subscribers. The official 2002 web site was launched in November 2000 at the following address: <www.un.org/rio+10>. The goal is to actively disseminate information and undertake other outreach and public awareness activities on the goals and objectives of the Summit, the state of its preparation and the importance of sustainable development.

30. The Secretariat is actively collaborating with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) regarding ways of involving the IPU Committee on Sustainable Development, as well as national parliaments, in the preparatory process.

VIII. Raising extrabudgetary resources for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

31. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session recommended that necessary steps be taken to establish a trust fund and urged international and bilateral donors to support preparations for the 10-year review through voluntary contributions to the trust fund and to support participation of representatives from developing countries in the regional and international preparatory process and the 2002 review event itself. The Commission also encouraged voluntary contributions to support the participation of major groups from developing countries in regional and international preparatory processes and the 2002 event.[2] The General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session reiterated the appeal to donors to support preparations

for the Summit with extrabudgetary contributions. A note verbale soliciting extrabudgetary contributions to the trust fund in support of preparatory activities and travel of representatives of developing countries to preparatory meetings was circulated to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York on 17 August 2000. A number of countries and other donors have already made their contributions or pledges to the trust fund. Other contributions are strongly encouraged.

IX. Involvement of major groups

32. Engagement of major groups in the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its preparatory process is critical to achieving successful outcomes of this milestone event. The emphasis on a bottom-up preparatory process for the Summit provides major groups with many more opportunities to influence the outcomes. Major groups are undertaking a diverse range of activities in the lead-up to the Summit, as the following examples demonstrate.

33. A Youth Summit is taking place in Borgholm, Sweden, in September 2001. The Summit is a joint effort of youth organizations, the Government of Sweden and UNEP. A model United Nations module for young people involved in the model United Nations programmes has been piloted by the United Nations Association-United States of America (UNA-USA) and will be launched in early summer 2001.

34. Women's groups have been working on documenting gender perspectives and analyses on progress achieved as well as making links between Agenda 21 and the Beijing Platform for Action.[3] The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) is planning to support the National Progression Targets process (an idea proposed to Governments by the Summit secretariat) through its network. It is not yet clear whether a large gathering of women, similar to one that took place prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, will be convened.

35. Indigenous peoples' organizations plan to conduct workshops and consultations related to the Summit at the twelfth Protecting Mother Earth Conference in August 2001 organized by the Indigenous Environmental Network. Plans are under way to conduct an assessment of the past 10 years from an indigenous peoples' perspective. A Summit-specific conference of indigenous people is planned and will focus on discussing "ways forward" to achieve sustainable development.

36. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is collaborating with the *International Herald Tribune* to prepare a series of special sections on "Business in the Rio decade". WBCSD is also working on a "Business Handbook of Best Practices" which will be completed by mid-2002. The International Chamber of Commerce and WBCSD are planning to organize a Business Forum in October 2001 to bring together representatives of business associations and business initiatives. A business summit to be held shortly before the World Summit is being considered.

37. Initiatives and campaigns on priority issues for non-governmental organizations are being launched. A recent example is the 10-point sustainable development priorities announced by the Alliance of Northern People for Environment and Development (ANPED). The Access Initiative being launched jointly by the World Resources Institute, the Environmental Management and Law Association (EMLA), Hungary, and PARTICIPA, Chile, aims to develop methodologies to assess the effectiveness of existing guidelines and other instruments on access to public information and participation.

38. A number of studies and publications are under way including the WorldWatch Institute's State of the World 2002 and Vital Signs 2002 reports. The Consensus Building Institute of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in collaboration with the Secretariat is undertaking an independent analysis of the experience of the Commission on Social Development with multi-stakeholder dialogue. A related study focusing on multi-stakeholder processes outside the Commission is being conducted by the United Nations Environment and Development Forum (UNED Forum).

39. Non-governmental organizations are organizing consultation meetings as well as supporting consultative activities at the national and regional levels. An international non-governmental organization consultation meeting was hosted in Copenhagen by the Danish non-governmental organization network in mid-2000. More recently, the South African non-governmental organization Host Committee has been formed through the South African National NGO

Coalition (SANGOCO). The NGO Host Committee has organized one national and one subregional non-governmental organization consultation and plans to continue with other subregional consultations in the coming months. At the regional level, the multi-stakeholder European Rio+10 Coalition held consultation meetings early in the process and is currently preparing for a region-wide consultation in May 2001.

40. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is planning a conference (November 2001) on "Equity for a Small Planet" as an international forum on the Summit. The Earth Council is continuing its work in support of the National Councils for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on strengthening civil society components. The Southern NGO Caucus of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be holding a Southern NGO Summit in October 2001 in Algeria.

41. Trade unions, through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, are firming up their plans for the preparations, including various campaigns on their priority issues. The World Conservation Union and the International Council of Scientific Unions are considering the optimal ways in which scientific and technological communities could contribute to the preparations for the Summit and to the Summit itself.

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 9* (E/2000/29), chap. I, sect. B, decision 8/1, para. (m).

[3] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.